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ABSTRACT

Graduate education in the People's Republic of China is discussed with attention to: historical developments, criteria and trends in enrollment, selection/approval of degree-granting institutions, reforms in graduate education, and international exchanges. Trends in graduate enrollments and degree awards since the Cultural Revolution are briefly covered. As of 1987, there were 238 institutions, with 1,830 disciplines that have been authorized to confer doctoral degrees, while 545 institutions are authorized to confer master's degrees with 6,407 disciplines. Present policy focuses on improving the quality of Chinese graduate education. One emphasis is linking teaching, scientific research, and national economic development. Developments in graduate education include: candidates for the master of art's degree cannot exceed the age of 35, while doctoral candidates cannot be older than 40; 141 institutions of research and higher learning offer degree programs to part-time graduate students who have at least 2 years of working experience; and more than 200 Chinese universities and research institutions have exchange relationships and joint research programs with about 150 U.S. research and higher education institutions.
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Developments And Reforms of Graduate Education in
the People's Republic of China

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1. Introduction

The excellence of graduate education mirrors the level of
researches in the institutions of higher learning and affects a nation's
development of science and technology.

Reviewing the entire course of development of Chinese graduate
education ever since the founding of new China -- its ups and downs,
twists and turns, progress and retrogression, one can not help connecting
it with so called "the Cultural Revolution", which was actually the
anti-culture movement. During this period, the Chinese higher education
suffered severe damages and the graduate education was the worst
stricken area. In 1949 when the Communist Party of China took over the
power, there were only 107 M.A and Ph.D grantees out of the population
of about 450 million; ever since then the figure kept growing steadily.
By 1966, 23,393 graduate students were enrolled and 16,397 of them
were granted with degrees. But from the beginning of the Cultural
Revolution in 1966 to its end in 1977, for the entire eleven years, the
enrollment and the number of degree grantees were zero; faculties were
condemned and disgraced; intellectuals became the target of the
movement, there were prejudice against knowledge and

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anti-intellectualism in the society. The whole country was closed up to the outside world. Any activities enhancing knowledge would be considered foreign and antiquated. Tragic enough, some outstanding professors and researchers lost their lives, many were either physically injured or mentally affected, those who did survive became professionally incapable of teaching for they had been alienated from the world advanced skills and knowledge for so many years.

Graduate education in China was re-vitalized in October, 1977. After a year's preparation, enrollment was re-assumed in 1978 and "Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Granting of Academic Degrees" came into force on January 1, 1981. From that point on, Chinese graduate education started to set off on an entirely new journey. Incomplete statistics from 27 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities indicated that, in 1978 alone, more than 63,500 candidates registered for examinations to pursue graduate studies. 210 institutions of higher learning and 162 scientific research institutions legitimately accepted a total of 10,708 graduate students, which was seven times of the figure in 1965. There has been a steady growth in enrollment since then. In 1987, more than 53,300 are granted Master's Degree and 664 are granted Doctoral Degree. In fall this year, 394 institutions of higher learning and 355 research institutions have enrolled 35,726 graduate students. Of this enrollment, 50% of the students are with two years' career experience and registered as part-time students; 10.4% were recommended by the universities where they

graduated with BA degrees. They did not take the entrance examinations. 95.5% of them are university graduates with BA degrees. (People's Daily, Overseas Edition, Nov. 9, 1987.)

2. Present Scale of Graduate Education in China

Today, 238 institutions, with 1,830 disciplines, have been authorized by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council to confer Doctoral Degrees. 3,798 professors are approved as qualified to advise doctoral studies and researches. 545 institutions are authorized to confer Master's Degrees with 6,407 disciplines. (People's Daily, Overseas Edition, Nov. 15, 1987.)

3. Criteria for the Enrollment and Institutions

With the rapid expansion of graduate education, China has focused on the improvement of the policies and criteria to guarantee the quality of graduate education.

It is stipulated by the Chinese State Education Commission that:

- (1). "Guarantee the Quality and Develop Steadily" is the present policy concerning Chinese graduate education. All authorized institutions of researches and higher learning should proceed from

actual conditions in terms of faculty, research facility, budget and others in the enrollment planning.

(2). The enrollment of graduate education in each institution must be approved by the State Education Commission and become a part of national planning.

(3). In order to guarantee the development of graduate education, graduating students in regular universities and colleges may, half a year before graduation, register for graduate school entrance examinations; at the same time industrial and mining enterprises, scientific research institutions, governmental agencies, universities and colleges are required to take the interests of the nation into account and render vigorous support to those who are qualified to take such examinations.

(4). The institutions conferring degrees are strictly selected, examined, approved and authorized by the State Council.

The training of graduate students is usually conducted by integrating theoretical study with scientific research and integrating guidance from instructors with collective training given by teaching research sections.

(5). All Ph.D. students are required to master, besides the required courses, Chinese language and another two foreign languages.

4. Reforms in Graduate Education

Along with the economic reforms, there are reforms and achievements shown in graduate education as well.

(1). There is a new regulation on the age limit, which is that M.A. candidates can not exceed the age of 35 while Ph.D. candidates can not be older than 40.

(2). The Chinese Academic Committee of the State Council has authorized 141 institutions of research and higher learning to offer degree programs to part-time graduate students who have at least two-year working experience. This is different from the previous practice. So far, 115 students of the category are granted M.A. Degrees and 10 Ph.D. Degrees. It is estimated that by the end of this year, another several hundred part-time students will receive degrees. In the past two years, the part-time graduates made 50% of the total graduate student enrollment.

(3). In order to speed up the training of senior specialized personnel, the Chinese Academic Committee instituted a system in 1984 whereby graduate students studying in universities and colleges for M.A. Degree could start their study for the doctorate ahead of schedule. The new system applies to a small number of graduate students who have a high degree performance in the courses required for M.A. Degree, prove themselves highly capable in the initiate stage of research work or thesis

preparation, and have a real prospect of being trained for the doctorate. If they pass the qualification examinations, they can start their studies for the doctorate ahead of time.

(4). At the time of graduation, some undergraduate students who enjoy high degree of academic performance could be recommended by professors and institutions to become M.A. degree candidates without taking examinations.

(5). To enable graduate students to have more practical experience, this year more than 60 institutions of researches and higher learning encourage those newly accepted graduate students to obtain some working experience for a year or two before they come back for their degree pursuit. Their files will be kept alive and no further examinations are required.

(6). There was no such a form as graduate school in China before. The graduate studies and researches were administered at the institution level. Then, we realized the importance and necessity of setting up graduate schools. Since 1981, many graduate schools have been established to assume the responsibilities for the administration of graduate education.

5. International Exchanges

Someone once described China as a house with doors and windows shut tight. The house was cleaned time and again, but what people valued most were still the things inside the house. What they did was only removing the things from one place to another.

Now China's open door policy has brought new information home. The environment for classroom teaching and scientific research in universities and colleges has altered significantly. The leadership at every level has increasingly focused its attention on the linkage of teaching, scientific research and the national economic development.

Our universities and institutions of higher learning are strong in scientific research. Some of our sophisticated sciences are at the world level. The new policy has built a bridge for our faculty to get in touch with their colleagues abroad. Now, more than 200 Chinese universities and research institutions have established exchange relationship and joint research programs with about 150 institutions of research and higher learning in the United States.

More and more professionals and researchers lecture abroad and attend international conferences. There are about 10,000 professionals and scholars participating in various exchange and joint research programs with universities and research institutions in different countries. About 20,000 professors, scientists, engineers from

other countries come to China for conferences, lectures or research programs each year. They work in more than one thousand colleges, universities, factories, industrial enterprises and so on. The majority of them have come from the US, Japan, West Germany, Britain, France, Switherland, Italy and other 50 countries and regions. Through these productive and conducive activities, we are well informed of the development of world's advanced science and technology. Exchange program is always two-way-flow. We not only "import" advanced technology and also "export" our own. All the international exchanges have given great impetus to the advancement of Chinese graduate education.

Progress has been made in various aspects in our higher education. Many universities have readjusted the structure of administration, curriculum and made assessment for classroom teaching to scientific resarch. Faculties have reset their research programs and adopted the projects with the value of the future development. Our universities have set up 571 research centers with enterprises of nationwide for various joint research projects.

Chinese universities also accept international students. Up till now, we have accepted more thant 35,000 international students from 114 coutries and regions. In 1987, there are 7,000 international students studying in 195 disciplines on 95 campuses in 17 cities in China.

Every year more than 2,000 international students receive scholarships from the Chinese Government. In fall of 1987, about 70 international students registered for MA and Ph. D. degree programs. As far as we know, many of these students, when they returned home, are very successful in their careers. Many of them are now holding important and prestigious positions in their countries.

Although tremendous efforts have been made in the restoration and development of Chinese graduate education, the tasks facing Chinese educators and administrators to further improve graduate education are still enormous. We need more qualified professors and professionals, more and better research facilities and more vigorous support from the people. It is predicted, by both Chinese and foreign scholars, that in about five years' time, China will need a great number of well-trained personnel in marketing research, vocational education, agricultural research, industrial administration and management, legal services, architecture, hotel management, tourism, sociology and psychology.

Zhao Ziyang, the general secretary of the Communist Party of China, maintains in his report at the 13th National Conference of the Party that:

"Basically, the development of science
and technology, the revitalization of

the economy and indeed the progress of the whole society all depend on improving the quality of the work force and training large number of competent personnel. Education is of fundamental importance to the fulfillment of our long-range mission. We must therefore continue to stress the strategic role of education."

China has the biggest population, one out of every fourth person in the world is Chinese. The problem of feeding and clothing a billion people has basically been solved and living standards are rising every year. However, unfortunately, a quarter of our population is still illiterate or semilliterate. This slows down the development of our productive forces. Therefore, education is an urgent and utmost important issue for us. Now, we attach as much importance to education as we do to the national economic development and orient our work to the needs of modernization, the world and the future. We will devote more energy and efforts to bring new situation in our graduate education.